

**Thomas Jefferson to Elbridge Gerry, June 21, 1797,
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TO ELBRIDGE GERRY J. MSS.

Philadelphia, June 21, 1797.

My Dear Friend, —It was with infinite joy to me, that you were yesterday announced to the Senate, as envoy extraordinary, jointly with Genl. Pinckney & mr. Marshall, to the French republic. It gave me certain assurance that there would be a preponderance in the mission, sincerely disposed to be at peace with the French government & nation. Peace is undoubtedly at present the first object of our nation. Interest & honor are also national considerations. But interest, duly weighed, is in favor of peace even at the expence of spoliations past & future; & honor cannot now be an object. The insults & injuries committed on us by both the belligerent parties, from the beginning of 1793 to this day, & still continuing, cannot now be wiped off by engaging in war with one of them. As there is great reason to expect this is the last campaign in Europe, it would certainly be Better for us to rub thro this year, as we have done through the four preceding ones, and hope that on the restoration of peace, we may be able to establish some plan for our foreign connections more likely to secure our peace, interest & honor, in future. Our countrymen have divided themselves by such strong affections, to the French & the English, that nothing will secure us internally but a divorce from both nations; and this must be the object of every real American, and it's attainment is practicable without much self-denial. But for this, peace is necessary. Be assured of this, my dear Sir, that if we engage in a war during our present passions, & our present weakness in some quarters, that our

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Union runs the greatest risk of not coming out of that war in the shape in which it enters it. My reliance for our preservation is in your acceptance of this mission. I know the tender circumstances which will oppose themselves to it. But it's duration will be short, and it's reward long. You have it in your power, by accepting and determining the character of the mission, to secure the present peace & eternal union of your country. If you decline, on motives of private pain, a

substitute may be named who has enlisted his passions in the present contest, & by the preponderance of his vote in the mission may entail on us calamities, your share in which, & your feelings, will outweigh whatever pain a temporary absence from your family could give you. The sacrifice will be short, the remorse would be never ending. Let me, then, my dear Sir, conjure your acceptance, and that you will, by this act, seal the mission with the confidence of all parties. Your nomination has given a spring to hope, which was dead before. I leave this place in three days, and therefore shall not here have the pleasure of learning your determination. But it will reach me in my retirement, and enrich the tranquillity of that scene. It will add to the proofs which have convinced me that the man who loves his country on it's own account, and not merely for it's trappings of interest or power, can never be divorced from it, can never refuse to come forward when he finds that she is engaged in dangers which he has the means of warding off. Make then an effort, my friend, to renounce your domestic comforts for a few months, and reflect that to be a good husband and good father at this moment, you must be also a good citizen. With sincere wishes for your acceptance & success, I am, with unalterable esteem, dear Sir, your affectionate friend and servant.